



Vines: Terrorism Is Nothing New

by Donna Miles

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WASHINGTON - The war on terror isn't a conflict limited to Afghanistan and Iraq, but rather, "a national war for our survival as a nation," according to the commander of the Department of Defense's largest warfighting organization, the Army's XVIII Airborne Corps.

Lt Gen John R. Vines, who commands about 85,000 Soldiers in four combat divisions - all of which have seen combat in Southwest Asia - said that the war on terror boils down to defending the United States against the forces of evil. "Evil is out there, and evil wishes to attack us," he said.

Vines said the American public frequently talks about how the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, "changed the world for everyone." But terrorists had been fighting the United States long before the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, he said, launching more than 100 attacks against Americans around the world.

"Whether you date it from when militants overran the U.S. Embassy in Iran in 1979 or the Marine Corps barracks and U.S. Embassy were both bombed in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1983 or whether it was the bombing of the USS Cole in October 2000 or the (U.S. embassies) in Kenya or Tanzania in 1998 or Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996 or the World Trade Center in 1993," Vines said, "we have been under attack from extremists."

Vines said it took an event as dramatic as the World Trade Center attacks, "in prime time in one of the media capitals of the world, to drive home the fact that these people are serious about destroying us."

He said the Sept. 11 attacks did change the way the United States views terrorism - something he called "long overdue." "It ceased to be a law-enforcement issue and became, at least in the mind of our government, a war," Vines said.

He said the United States is "asking some extraordinary things" of its service members. "We are in a struggle, and there are some incredible sacrifices and service by our men and women," he said. "They need our 100-percent support, and we need to make sure that the American citizens know the heavy load they are carrying and value the sacrifices they are making."

He praised the “extraordinary heroism and extraordinary professionalism” of service members who are protecting the United States against terrorism, calling their efforts “absolutely amazing and inspirational.”

“It boils down to the individual Soldiers. It’s about having people who have the commitment, the courage, the will and the warrior values to confront the forces that threaten us,” he said.

“And only so long as we have those men and women who are able and willing to confront this will we be safe.”